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E L E G Y,

TO THE MEMORY OF

GEORGE W. A. COURTENAY, Esq.

CAPTAIN OF HIS MAJESTY'S SHIP

T H E B O S T O N ;

WHO FELL AT SEA IN AN ENGAGEMENT WITH THE FRENCH SHIP AMBUSCADE,
AUGUST THE FIRST, 1793.

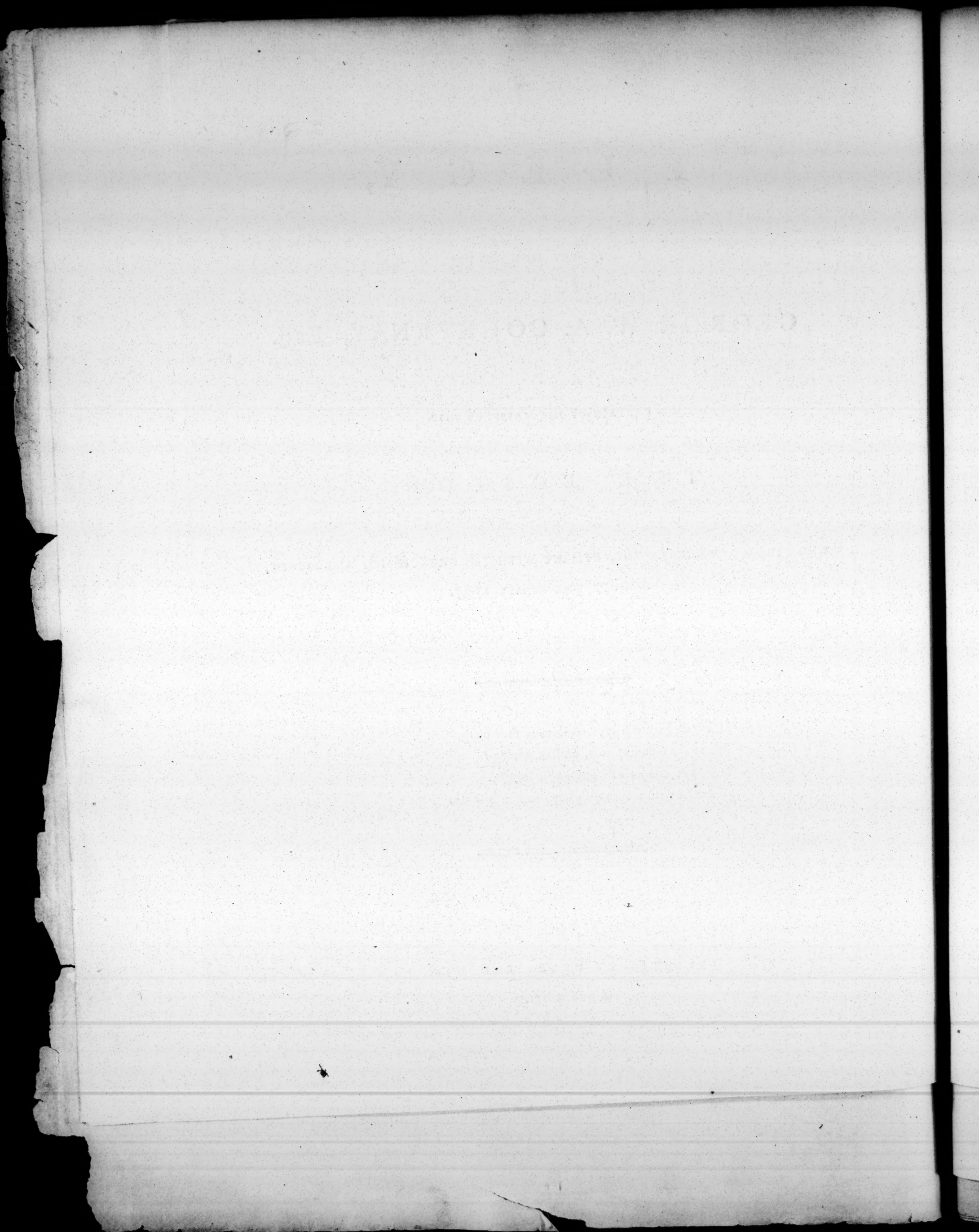
How can I see the gay, the brave, the young,
Fall in the cloud of war, and lie unsung?
In joys of conquest he resigns his breath,
And fill'd with England's glory, smiles in death.

ADDISON.

L O N D O N :

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M. DCC. XCIII.



E L E G Y.

WHEN daring valour meets an early bier,
Who can refuse the tribute of a tear?
When gentle virtues grace the young and brave,
We melt with pity o'er the untimely grave.
Midst all the praises honour could attain,
COURTENAY, for you I pour the plaintive strain;
Too soon, alas! you fell in manhood's bloom,
And British sailors bend around your tomb;
With you their ardour fled, their hopes expir'd,
Whose kindness won them, and whose courage fir'd:
No servile press disgrac'd your gallant crew,
Freely they came, to fight, to bleed with you:
Around you throng'd a firm, intrepid corps,
The native guard of Albion's sea-girt shore.

When RODNEY's genius forc'd the Gallick line,
In victory's van he saw you early shine;
When haughty France, leagu'd with imperious Spain,
Struck to his flag, and own'd Britannia's reign:
He fondly mark'd you with a father's eyes,
And saw in you his noble spirit rise;

While

While glory's path he pointed to your view,
 The brilliant path you saw himself pursue :
 This proud incentive, to your latest breath,
 Kindled the flame that brightly gleam'd in death.

Alas ! what words, or numbers can impart,
 A balm to sooth a widow'd mother's heart ?
 While dark despair on her wan cheek appears,
 And tender memory grief itself endears.
 No more she hopes, in smiles of welcome drest,
 To clasp a husband to her faithful breast ;
 No more, array'd in beauty's winning charms,
 To speak her joy, and fold him in her arms ;
 And bid her anxious throbbing fears to cease,
 Blest in his love, and sweet domestick peace.
 Delusive fancy still the scene pursues,
 Though still the scene your piercing grief renews :
 While sad remembrance points the blissful time,
 When first you met in India's flowery clime ;¹
 When the warm lover, in the glow of youth,
 Breath'd the soft sigh, and vow'd eternal truth :
 For you his passion still increas'd through life ;
 The beauteous maid was blended in the wife.
 Ev'n when his orphans meet your fond embrace,
 You see his image in each blooming face ;

¹ Captain Courtenay married a daughter of the late General Ogle's, at Madras, in the year 1786.

How glad some once on his return you flew,
 To point each semblant feature to his view ;
 As round his knees they clung, and sweetly strove
 To lisp their joy in half-form'd words of love.
 They smile, unconscious of the fatal blow,
 Or only weep to see your sorrows flow.
 Your heart-felt plaints a generous nation hears,
 Adopts your babes with sympathetick tears ;
 Their father's deeds her naval trophies grace,
 And throw a splendour round his infant race ;
 With tearful pride in future days they'll tell,
 How in his country's cause he greatly fell ;
 And pleas'd they'll say, the bard who chants his praise,
 From friendship, kindred, pour'd these plaintive lays.

A parent's woe^a new streams of grief supplies,
 While hopeless sorrow dims her aching eyes ;
 Dear to her soul, she weeps a gallant son,
 Too soon, alas ! his course of glory run ;
 Those aged orbs her darling view no more,
 And the last charm of ebbing life is o'er :
 His sire rever'd, now sunk to endless rest,
 No longer shares the pangs that rend her breast :

^a Lady Jane Courtenay, sister to the late Earl of Bute.

“ O spare her sighs !” with fault’ring voice he cry’d,
 When generous love one parting look deny’d.³
 Can melting strains a lenient balm impart,
 To ease the anguish of a bleeding heart ?
 Can flowing verse a poignant grief erase,
 Or chase the gloom that clouds a mother’s face ?
 Vainly the muse her soothing art employs ;
 With flowers she only strews our faded joys.
 Though your brave sons expir’d in manhood’s bloom,
 In Britain’s cause, they met an envy’d doom ;
 With pride, you saw them emulous of fame,
 To prove their title to a splendid name ;
 That shines, like yours, renown’d through many an age,
 Deriving lustre from the historick page.
 Fair valour’s meed your CONWAY⁴ toil’d to gain,
 His distant tomb adorns Lucia’s plain :

³ Alluding to a particular circumstance, in which Mr. Courtenay shewed great fortitude and tenderness, at the moment of his death.

⁴ Captain Conway Courtenay, of the 15th regiment, served during the whole American war, in the brunt of every action, and distinguished himself by his spirit and abilities.—He was esteemed and beloved both by the officers and privates of the corps. He was present at the attack of St. Lucia ; and was afterwards sent on a particular service with a flag of truce to Martinico, by General (now Sir William) Meadows. Captain Courtenay died soon afterwards, on his return to St. Lucia, universally regretted. He had the honour of Sir W. Meadows’s friendship and esteem :—no higher eulogium can be paid him.

Round

Round their lov'd chief the hardy veterans mourn,
And scatter laurels o'er his sacred urn.

For you Religion yields consoling peace,
And points to realms, where all afflictions cease;
The good no more at prosperous vice repine,
And kindred spirits meet in bliss divine:
There faith celestial bids her mansion rise,
And souls immortal claim congenial skies.
—Yet for your latest hope the tear will flow,
Who fell, when conquest hover'd o'er his prow!
Dearer each day his social merits rose,
And spread the charm that sympathy bestows;
For he was vers'd in every pleasing art,
That native sweetness lends the untutor'd heart;
From him, distress still drew the pitying tear,
And friendship found him zealous and sincere:
With innate virtues rich from Nature's mine,
The vivid stamp confess'd her hand divine.

Oft have I seen the master-passion rise,
Light up his frame, and sparkle in his eyes,
As round him Honour threw her brightest beam,
When Albion's triumphs were the glorious theme;
Her foes alone provok'd his generous ire,
Then sudden burst the patriotick fire;

Through

Through his bold crew the electrick fervour darts,
 Shoots thro' each breast, and warms their dauntless hearts.
 Firm at his side with ardent hope they glow,
 And safety scorn, when commerce dreads a foe:
 Hence with exulting glance and proud disdain,
 He crouds each sail, and tempts the western main;
 Heroick skill to Gallia's sons displays,
 Who hail his name, and crown his fall with praise;
 Ev'n to the last his gallant band he fires,
 Exults in England's glory, and expires.⁵

⁵ Extract of a letter from His Excellency Mr. Hammond, His Majesty's
 Minister Plenipotentiary to the United States of America:

“ To C. S. COURTENAY, Esq.

“ I cannot content myself with merely transmitting to you an extract of a letter I have received from Mr. Edwards, (first Lieutenant of the Boston,) which contains an account of your brother's death; because I conceive it incumbent on me further to add my testimony of the zeal for the service of his country which Captain Courtenay manifested in this last action of his life.— For being on the Newfoundland station, and learning that a French frigate (the Ambuscade, of 36 guns,) had for some time greatly harassed the commerce of His Majesty's subjects in those seas; Captain Courtenay immediately determined (though it was not within the strict line of his duty) to proceed to the American coasts, engage the French frigate, and repress her depredations. In the performance of this duty he lost his life. But his exertions, though unsuccessful, have been such as to merit the gratitude of every British subject interested in the protection of the commerce of his fellow citizens, or the glory of his country. It may perhaps be some consolation to you, Sir, to learn, that the *ability and gallantry which your late brother displayed during the action have been acknowledged by the enemy.*”

THE END.

